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ABSTRACT

A number of states and school districts have taken the five factors of the "Effective Schools Formula" (strong leadership, high expectations of students, emphasis on basic skills, orderly environment, and frequent student evaluations) and applied them in school improvement programs. Some researchers and practitioners have reservations about widespread acceptance of such an overall prescription. An analysis of successful schools found that their incorporated practices fell into nine broad categories such as academically rich programs and parent participation. Effective teachers are semi-autonomous professionals who are knowledgeable about content, teaching strategies, and communicating to students. Effective principals are flexible in their approach to leadership and create and maintain a suitable learning environment. Effective schools center around students; offer academically rich programs; provide instruction that promotes learning; have a positive school climate and extensive staff development; foster collegial interaction; practice shared leadership; and involve parents. Guidelines for creating effective schools include programs for excellence that focus on the individual school building. (7 references) (EJS)

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New Insights From Research on Effective Schools

Some states and school districts have taken the five factors of the "Effective Schools Formula" or plans developed in other districts and applied them in school improvement programs with few, if any, modifications. A number of researchers and practitioners have reservations about such widespread acceptance of an overall prescription for improving schools. New research on effective schools provides a more complex image of schools which undertake improvements that promote student achievement.

Early Effective Schools Research Findings

The effective schools formula that was popularized by Edmonds (1979) consists of five factors: strong leadership by the principal, particularly in instructional matters; high expectations for student achievement on the part of teachers; an emphasis on basic skills; an orderly environment; and the frequent, systematic evaluation of students. Models of school improvement have been widely embraced throughout the nation based on the belief that these factors were strongly supported in the effective schools research. However, a number of researchers and practitioners have reservations about such widespread acceptance of an overall prescription for improving schools.

In a major review of the early effective school studies, Purkey and Smith (1982) found only two of the factors were consistent across studies: (1) *strong instructional leadership from the principal or other instructional figure*, and (2) *high expectations by the staff for student achievement*. There were two additional important findings from the early studies that failed to make the more popular lists of effective schools characteristics. Those factors were (1) *a school-wide effective staff training program*, and (2) *a considerable degree of control by the staff over instruction and training decisions in the school*. Current research findings indicate that these factors, the two mentioned above, and several additional ones, are critical to both school improvement and to school excellence.

New Insights Into Effective Schools

New insights on effective schools have been gained from more recent research studies and reviews. Stedman (1987) concentrated on case studies of those effective schools that had achieved grade-level success with low-income students for several years. His analysis found that successful schools incorporated practices that fell into nine broad categories:

- ethnic and racial pluralism,
- parent participation,
- shared governance with teachers and parents,
- skilled use and training of teachers,
- academically rich programs,
- student responsibility for school affairs,
- personal attention to students,
- an accepting and supportive environment, and

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- teaching aimed at preventing academic problems.

Stedman suggests that these factors should be thought of as a set of highly interrelated practices where efforts in one area will generally facilitate efforts in the others.

While every school has its own character, Roueche and Baker (1986) found that effective schools share certain climate factors that form the foundation for student success. Those common factors include: a sense of order, purpose, direction, and coherence; orderly classrooms; a student-centered focus; quality in both academics and co-curricular activities; a climate of optimism and high expectations; and organizational health.

Wayson and his associates (1988) reported that excellent schools focus on student learning in both basic and critical thinking skills. Such schools:

- evaluate both the testing program and individual student progress;

- foster conditions enabling teachers to work together on instruction, on planning curriculum, on solving problems, and on improving the school or organization;

- couple teacher evaluation systems with staff development programs to help teachers improve their skills;

- maintain extensive extracurricular programs for students; and

- involve parents.

Most importantly, Wayson found that "cooperative working relationships among the staff" clearly set the effective schools apart from the less effective schools.

Effective Teachers

Effective schools encourage and develop teacher effectiveness. Based on studies conducted over a ten-year period at the Institute for Research on Teaching, Porter and Brophy (1988) describe effective teachers as semi-autonomous professionals who are clear about their instructional goals.

The researchers found that effective teachers are knowledgeable about their content and the strategies for teaching it, communicate to their students what is expected of them, and why. Effective teachers make expert use of existing instructional materials in order to devote more time to practices that enrich and clarify the content. They are knowledgeable about their students, adapting instruction to their needs and anticipating misconceptions in their existing knowledge (Porter & Brophy, 1988).

Effective teachers help students develop metacognitive strategies and provide opportunities to master them. They address higher- as well as lower-level cognitive objectives and monitor students' understanding by offering regular appropriate feedback. They integrate their instruction with that in other subject areas; accept responsibility for student outcomes; and are thoughtful and reflective about their practice (Porter & Brophy, 1988).

Effective Principals

The effect of the principal's leadership on school effectiveness has been well-documented. As managers, administrators must insure the effective use of fiscal and human resources in accomplishing organization goals. As leaders, they "must display the vision and skills necessary to create and maintain a suitable teaching and learning environment, to develop school goals, and to inspire others to achieve these goals" (Guthrie & Reed, 1986, p. 199).

Roueche and Baker (1986) summarized principals' effective leadership behaviors. Effective principals are flexible in their approach to leadership and use an ap-

propriate type of control for professionals. Teachers are trusted as responsible professionals, and effective principals know their staff well enough to delegate tasks appropriately. Effective principals build cohesiveness within the organization and recognize and reward staff accomplishments. They solve problems through collaboration.

A Picture of Effective Schools

The recent findings from research on effective schools, effective teaching, and effective school administration provide a complex image of schools which undertake improvements that promote student achievement. The following characteristics emerge:

Effective Schools Are Student Centered: They make an effort to serve all students, create support networks to assist students, involve students in school affairs, respect and celebrate the ethnic and linguistic differences among students, and have student welfare as a first priority.

Effective Schools Offer Academically Rich Programs: They address higher- as well as lower-order cognitive objectives, provide an enriched environment through a variety of options, have an active co-curricular program, provide in-depth coverage of content, and appropriately monitor student progress and provide feedback.

Effective Schools Provide Instruction That Promotes Student Learning: Teachers communicate expectations to students, hold themselves responsible for student learning, provide focused and organized instructional sessions, adapt instruction to student needs, anticipate and correct student misconceptions, and use a variety of teaching strategies.

Effective Schools Have a Positive School Climate: They have a distinctive normative structure that supports instruction. They have a sense of order, purpose, and direction fostered by consistency in approach among teachers; an atmosphere of encouragement where students are praised and rewarded; a work-centered environment; and high optimism as well as expectations for student learning.

Effective Schools Foster Collegial Interaction: Teachers work together as colleagues in instruction to plan curriculum and to refine teaching practices.

Effective Schools Have Extensive Staff Development: The teacher evaluation system is used to help teachers improve their skills. Inservice is practical, on-the-job training that is tailored to meet the specific needs of staff members. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practices in order to improve them.

Effective Schools Practice Shared Leadership: School administrators understand and use a leadership style appropriate for professionals; solve problems through collaboration, team, or group decision making; know their staff and delegate authority; communicate and build cohesiveness; and use their position to recognize as well as reward accomplishments of both staff and students.

Effective Schools Involve Parents: They establish methods for communicating with parents, involve parents in the activities of the school, have parents serve as resources to extend the efforts of the school, include parents in planning and decision making, and depend on parents to provide good public relations for the school.

Guidelines for Creating Effective Schools

From their study of "excellent" schools, Wayson and his associates (1988) developed a set of guidelines for those who wanted to create more effective schools. Among the guidelines were the following:

- Programs to foster excellence in education should focus on the individual school building.

- School system policies and practices on personnel, curriculum, and resources allocation must support programs at the building level if excellence is expected.

- Policy decisions at the central office level may specify the ends or outcomes, but the means should be left to those closest to the students.

- The teacher must be given a central role in the planning and decision making involved in all facets of the school's operation.

- School staffs must be organized in ways that facilitate problem solving and foster practices that result in excellence.

- Every school building that pursues excellence must become an institution that fosters lifelong learning.

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